

King's Children.

ECCLESIASTICAL AMUSEMENTS.

Selected from the *Christian Endeavorer* by Mrs. Laura Slotter, North Ontario, California.

Rev. E. P. Marvin, the well-known evangelist, was requested by the *Endeavorer* to write his views on amusements and suggestions for the social committees of Young People's Societies. The following is what he has to say on the subject:

In response to your request I will present a few thoughts to the young upon ecclesiastical amusements.

All intelligent and devout Christians are frequently grieved and put to shame by certain methods of the church to raise money and furnish amusement. These methods seem almost infinite in number, variety, and razzle-dazzle.

The press, usually lenient, in some cases make these frivolous, disgusting, and even immoral devices the subject of denunciation and the butt of ridicule.

We cannot condemn the press for despising and condemning methods of money-making and popularity that would disgrace a decent business house, and social capers that would disgrace a decent social club. While some only condemn the abuse of

"The kitchen for feasting and parlor for play,"

others condemn the principle of fun and feasting in the house of God. Many religious bodies, like the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, have condemned "these unbiblical and secularizing expedients" and instructed pastors to educate the people out of them into the true spirit and method of giving as an act of worship. While the young, in the exuberance of youthful life, may do their share of this unblest business, pastors, officers and older members are chiefly responsible, for the young usually follow wise and faithful leadership out of this snare.

The church is an assembly of God called out of the world into brotherhood, sonship and heirship. It is a supernatural, living organism, energized by divine power, and not a natural organ run by human power.

Its mission is plainly and solely its commission. Its influence pervades all spheres, but it is incorporated by the Holy Spirit to operate through direct Gospel methods. She has a life and death message to deliver with speed, and upon this she is to concentrate all her powers. She cannot espouse every good thing under the sun and make all these departments of her organism. John Wesley said to his preachers, "You have nothing to do but to preach the Gospel," and a

still greater man said, "This one thing I do."

It is evident that the church is not a house of merchandise, a bureau of amusements, or a social club. Nothing of this kind is nominated in her incorporation, or in any instructions to ambassadors.

Corporately the church is not to do business to make money, but to receive the money made by individuals, as free-will offerings, and transmit them to the proper object. Paul made tents and sold them in open market, but he did not get up fair or festival to get money from the heathen for the benefit of the church.

From the first, when the tabernacle was built, through all the teachings and examples of the Old and New Testaments, one method alone was approved of God and practiced, that of free-will offerings.

The world claims some measure of control in institutions that it supports, and if Mr. Ocamp and Mrs. Osham support the church beware of their influence.

The church kitchen and parlor for huxtering and junketing is a modern novelty, not introduced at the suggestion of a purer piety. The leaders of the Y. M. C. A. advise that entertainments should not be held to raise money for the society.

It is no part of the mission of the blood-bought and heaven-sent church to furnish amusement or entertainment for any one. The current ecclesiastical frivolity is a gigantic inconsistency. The young people where I labored were smart enough to get up their own entertainments without ecclesiastical aid.

The early saints indeed had their holy Agapæ of fellowship, but our modern church festivals stand in the wide moral contrast, as scenes of carnal revelry and ungodly mirth. We are not to cultivate sociability in the realm of worldliness, where,

"Mirth doth into folly glide,
And folly into sin."

If we put the Gospel on stage exhibition with juvenile amateurs, as the Romish church once did in the "Mysteries and Moralities," how shall we condemn the world's theater?

Indeed these ecclesiastical amusements and imitations, invented as antidotes or counter attractions, have been training schools, and have whetted the appetite for the real thing, so that ten times as many of our young people now go to the theater and the dance as at the beginning of the experiment, and the theater was never more polluted with fleshly devilishness. The world may want fun and sin, but it is no part of our business to furnish it.

"But we cannot draw and hold the

young without these." It is ruinous to their souls to hold them by such means. The early church held the young by spiritual forces alone, and in the face of flames and lions. Every branch of the reformed in Christendom drew and held the young better than we do now, before the saints ever dreamed of the attractions of "the kitchen, the chatter and the drama." "But you would tie up the young people." No, I would not use the hard padlock of the law but the sweet wedlock of love. I would set them free in the truth and get them filled with the joys of God's salvation. God's method is to expel evil with good. I would depend on the expulsive power of new and holy affections, to drive out sinful pleasure-loving.

Christ and the Apostles never dreamed of propagating the Gospel by such methods. God's method of converting is by contrast, man's by conformity. The world shrewdly solicits:

"My children they dote on all such things,
And if you their love would win,
You must do as they do, and walk in the way
That they are walking in."

Young friends, God made the church, man made the sects, and the devil makes the fun for them. You will find that if you will build a church, stage, and kitchen, the devil will enter, and you can never get him out until you remove his lodge.

Some one says: "The less piety a church has the more ice cream, oysters and strawberries it takes to run it." Let me appeal to you to rise in youthful, consecrated vigor, and show that a church may have piety enough to run without any of these, except in our separate homes. Do not drag the royal robes of the expectant bride of Christ through a church kitchen, nor expect her to dance attendance on scenes of carnal revelry and ungodly mirth.

I have appealed to older Christians and I now appeal earnestly to you. Consider with candor, compare with scripture, pray and act promptly and bravely. Resent and refute the assumption that pious young people cannot be drawn and held to worship and work without the bait of food and fun. Show yourselves "salt" and "ice cream" to the world.

Carry out your late, wise aim to deepen spiritual life, and elevate the grade of Christian living and giving.

How noble, brave and Christlike for you when in convention assembled, as a happy surprise to your Elders, and a much needed tonic for the church, to issue a declaration and testimony for holy separation from the world, and against this "Amusement Heresy and Cooking-Stove Apostacy."